

Testimony

House Concurrent Resolution 3051

House Education Committee

Wednesday, February 23, 2005; 2 p.m.

North Dakota Department of Health

Good morning, Chairman Kelsch and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Terry Dwelle, and I am the State Health Officer of the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here today to testify in support of House Concurrent Resolution 3051.

Unfortunately, no magic formula exists that can solve the many problems threatening the health and welfare of our youth. This legislative study, however, will provide a unique opportunity to bring together key people, resources, programs and decision makers to promote the understanding of the interplay between health and education.

Most people agree that for kids to succeed in school, they cannot be tired or hungry, use illegal drugs, or be concerned that violence may occur at any time around them. Perhaps less apparent, however, is the fact that behaviors such as tobacco use, unhealthy eating and inadequate physical activity adversely affect not only a child's health, but also his or her ability to learn.

Recent trends in North Dakota are alarming. For example:

- One out of every six children in the sixth grade is overweight.
- The number of overweight adolescents increased from 7.2 percent in 1999 to 9.3 percent in 2003.
- We have the highest rate of binge drinking among teens.
- Although adolescent smoking rates have declined significantly from 41 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2003, we are still above the national rate of 21.9 percent

This data helps to illustrate that the educational and physical needs of children simply cannot be separated. We must work together in developing strategies that address health issues and encourage comprehensive healthy lifestyles. This legislative study is an important step to addressing health issues that affect our student population.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.